



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE MONROE DOCTRINE AFTER THE WAR ¹

GEORGE G. WILSON

Professor of International Law, Harvard University

THE President of the United States on January 22, 1917, in the words, "Perhaps I am the only person in high authority amongst all the people of the world who is at liberty to speak and hold nothing back," proposed a Monroe Doctrine for the world. This was in the now celebrated "peace without victory" address to the Senate. The President also said, "I feel confident that I have said what the people of the United States would wish me to say," and later in the same address he asserted, "I fain would believe that I am speaking for the silent mass of mankind everywhere."

As president of the United States, Mr. Wilson's words may unquestionably and properly be regarded in foreign countries as expressing the policy of the United States government. As the head of the government of a state occupying an important place in the world, when many other states are engaged in war, the claim to be speaking for the silent mass of mankind everywhere is not wholly presumption.

It can also certainly be claimed that a president of the United States in 1917 has an equal right with a president of the United States in 1823 to state what American policy is, and if in 1917 the policy of 1823 is reaffirmed, then such policy would be worthy of even greater consideration in international affairs.

President Wilson on January 22, 1917, proposing a concert of powers, government by consent of the governed, freedom of the seas, and limitation of armament, advocated that

the nations should with one accord adopt the doctrine of President Monroe as the doctrine of the world; that no nation should seek to extend its policy over any other nation or people, but that every

¹ Address delivered at the National Conference on Foreign Relations of the United States, held under the auspices of the Academy of Political Science, at Long Beach, N. Y., May 30, 1917.

people should be left free to determine its own policy, its own way of development, unhindered, unthreatened, unafraid, the little along with the great and powerful.

Clearly, then, this recently announced American policy is for the period after the war to enlarge the scope and operation of the Monroe Doctrine. The realization of this fact is evident in foreign opinion. On January 24 Bonar Law, chancellor of the exchequer, in a speech at Bristol, said of the address of President Wilson, "What President Wilson is longing for, we are fighting for." On January 26 it was announced from Petrograd, that Russia "can gladly endorse President Wilson's communication." The part relating to the freedom of the seas found particular response in Russia. From other countries came statements that the ideals of the address were approved, but that the task involved was appalling, considering the present condition of the world.

As the United States has been the supporter of the Monroe Doctrine in the past, it must doubtless be its supporter after the war. It would be reasonable to conclude that the President, speaking on January 22, 1917, was speaking of the probable attitude of the government of the United States toward the doctrine. The principles of the doctrine would therefore be involved in the American ideas for the settlement of world difficulties. The doctrine in its new form would cease to be narrowly American and would have a world basis. If it means merely that each state should be allowed unhampered opportunity for development, such an ideal would meet little formal opposition. If it means that the United States should be recognized as controlling the destinies of the American continent there would doubtless be opposition. Even if expanded into the doctrine of America for Americans or some form of Pan-Americanism there might be question of world-wide approval. The doctrine may therefore be passing even now to a wider field of influence.

It should be said, however, that the United States is no longer sole arbiter as to the interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine, as it once was, because under a large number of

treaties this government has agreed to refer differences even when relating to the Monroe Doctrine to investigation by a commission. Indeed, under these treaties disputes of every nature whatsoever are to be referred to a commission. Such treaties are operative with nearly all the great states except Germany and Japan, and with most of the smaller powers.

Again, it may be said that it is to be presumed that these so-called Bryan treaties were made to be observed. The commissions to be established in accordance with the terms of these treaties are international rather than American. Therefore under the treaties by which the United States is already bound and has been bound since 1913, the Monroe Doctrine, if the subject of a difference with a treaty power, must be referred to an international commission. For the parts of the world now under these treaties the doctrine has had since 1913 something of the aspect which President Wilson's address may be forecasting for an area much larger than the Americas.

Of these treaties there are in fact now ratified twenty or more, and about half as many more have been negotiated. If thus for half the states of the world the Monroe Doctrine may now be subjected to international standards of judgment, its purely national and American character may be said already to have been waived. The next step—the recognition by the world of the general principles underlying the doctrine as likewise sound for world policy—would not now be a long step for the United States.

When the Monroe Doctrine was originally published in Europe it met with approval from liberal statesmen, who hailed it as shedding "joy, exultation, and gratitude over all free men in Europe." The reactionary Metternich maintained that it was a natural calamity following the establishment of free states. Later, Bismarck regarded it as a piece of "international impertinence." At home the propositions of Monroe were received with a degree of proud self-satisfaction. By many it was regarded as giving to the Declaration of Independence a wider scope. Many other interpretations followed, and these were frequently adapted to temporary policies, but the doctrine was always regarded as a choice American contribution toward the well-being of the western continent.

It is now proposed by President Wilson not that no European nation should seek to extend its authority over an American nation but "that no nation should seek to extend its policy over any other nation or people."

The reason for the early acceptance of the Monroe Doctrine was the physical power of the United States and the remoteness geographically of the area to which the doctrine applied. President Cleveland in his message of December 17, 1895, stated that the doctrine "cannot become obsolete while our republic endures" and that it found its basis in "the theory that every nation shall have its rights protected and its just claims enforced." Secretary of State Olney at the same period pointed out to Great Britain that "the people of the United States have vital interest in the cause of popular self-government" and that the British policy was so threatening to American policy and rights that his government could not permit, "if the power of the United States is adequate," the accomplishment of the British ends. There is thus involved, if the Monroe Doctrine is to be maintained, the existence of a power behind it which will ensure respect.

In a sense the Monroe Doctrine aimed in 1823 to make the western hemisphere "safe for democracy." The President's war message of April 2, 1917, said, "The world must be made safe for democracy." In this broad conception the United States may thus be said to be fighting for a Monroe Doctrine for the world.

Experience has shown that the western hemisphere has not been "safe for democracy" at all times and that the United States has had to be ready to use force to maintain the rights of self-governing nations. Accordingly in the same message and elsewhere President Wilson has expressed the conviction that there must be "a partnership of democratic nations" to maintain their institutions. This idea had already received general acceptance among the leading nations of the world and has been more and more generally approved as the war has dragged from weeks into months and from months into years.

President Wilson in his war message to Congress on April 2, 1917, stating that his mind had not changed since January 22, said:

Our object now, as then, is to vindicate the principles of peace and justice in the world as against selfish autocratic power, and to set up amongst the really free and self-governed peoples of the world such a concert of purposes and of action as will henceforth insure the observance of these principles.

Monroe, looking to the political system of central Europe in 1823, had taken a similar position, saying of the attitude of the powers belonging to the so-called Holy Alliance that it was impossible that they "should extend their political system to any portion of either (American) continent without endangering our peace and happiness; nor can any one believe that our southern brethren, if left to themselves, would adopt it of their own accord."

It is evident now that the United States does not desire alone to maintain the principles of such a doctrine as that enunciated by Monroe. The President declared on April 2 that "the great, the generous Russian people have been added in all their native majesty and might to the forces that are fighting for freedom in the world, for justice and for peace. Here is a fit partner for a league of honor."

Certainly some kind of league will be needed if the principles of the Monroe Doctrine are to receive general respect. There is developing a growing opinion favorable to a sanction for international security and peace by co-operation or joint action of some kind. Whether this sanction be furnished by a league to enforce peace or by some other guaranty, it is certain that the world seems weary of the old system under which any ruler might, if he decided it to be for his interest, disturb the peace of the world and subdue weaker peoples. Monroe in 1823 had said of the then weaker states to the south of the United States that this government would view as "a manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States . . . any interposition for the purpose of oppressing them or controlling in any other manner their destiny." These states were at that time democracies and they were small and weak. The United States placed behind them the considerable power which the nation at that time wielded, and the democratic form of government has prevailed upon the western continent. The

United States by treaty agreement putting the Monroe Doctrine to the test of fair international opinion, has in recent years shown its willingness to justify the doctrine upon its merits.

Now with broader policy the United States proposes that after the war the powers of the world unite to guarantee for the larger area what it has guaranteed for the Americas—that democracy shall have an opportunity to develop without foreign intervention. The acceptance of this idea by the states of the world is not yet certain.

The American argument is not difficult, however. If it is good for the Americas that states and peoples should have complete freedom for self-realization, it is likewise good for the other states of the world. Of this belief the United States and other American states are now giving proof by action. While such a doctrine may imperil thrones, it builds up peoples, and for its extension even hostilities may be justified, as has been officially asserted:

We shall fight for the things we have always carried nearest our hearts—for democracy, for the right of those who submit to an authority to have a voice in their own governments, for the rights and liberties of small nations, for a universal dominion of right by such a concert of free peoples as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free.

The United States cannot under such principles claim isolation as a justification for its policies, but the Monroe Doctrine if it is to survive after the war must rest upon the broader support which its fundamental character merits. It is possible that in its narrower interpretation as applied to the Americas because of their "free and independent condition" the Monroe Doctrine may still be maintained after the war, but it is to be hoped that under the broader scope of the principles of the doctrine, through a concert of the nations life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness may be permanently secure under governments deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.